

Ananda Mela, January 2006



Fantastic kiirtan with our incredible kiirtan band.... Many initiations... 100 adults and 100 children!... Heart Circle (an amazing kiirtan process) was totally transforming... Secrets of Yoga -- a three day intensive course... Prout & Microvita Workshops... Candle Making, Laughter Yoga, Aboriginal Dance-- and the beautiful choir lead by Jyoshna singing Prabhat Samgiit... Over \$10,000 raised for Ananda Palli... fun and playful sports... Everything done by volunteers.... yummy food!

Everyone touched, inspired and dancing in bliss by the end!

AMURT'S ROLE IN THE GLOBAL RELIEF GAME

by Dada Shiilabhadrananda

The earthquake/tsunami of December 26, 2004 was notable for the widespread damage to death and property it caused over several countries. The response of humanity towards that disaster was also notable. It has become the largest funded relief operation in history with estimates of \$8 billion having been raised from all over the world.

AMURT has found a place in the ongoing relief and rehabilitation activities in Indonesia where the major share of the earthquake and tsunami's damage was felt. Our small team has learned much from the experience and is continuing to do so as we associate with some of the 180 NGO's in Indonesia to assist in the reconstruction of the Aceh Province in northern Sumatra Island.

I have had several insights about this operation as they relate to Ananda Marga and AMURT that I would like to share with the reader. I would also like to offer some suggestions about a possible future course of direction

for AMURT and perhaps for some other departments of our organization also.

It has been interesting to note the need for all the players involved in the relief operation to work together. This is in spite of the huge differences in outlook, background, education, customs and thinking patterns. We may roughly divide the various groups involved in the operation into two broad categories. One represents the local player, namely the Indonesian government and Indonesian NGO's. The other represents the international player, namely the international community composed of UN agencies, international NGOs and the governments of different countries as represented by their Embassies. Indonesia's outlook and paradigm is basically an "Eastern" one: family-centered, low technological approach, respect for tradition and authority and similar other characteristics. The international community represents (for lack of a better word) a "Western" one: system-centered, high tech approach, money-based solution to

problems, etc. There are wide gaps in perception between the two groups who are forced to work together to address the crisis of the disaster.

I see a similar situation in Ananda Marga Mission as a whole. We may use the contemporary phrase of a "work in progress" to accurately describe the ongoing evolution of our organization through all of its ups and downs. Baba wanted a beautiful blending of Eastern mysticism and Western science to create a new human culture. It is a long process. It requires much self-analysis and self-effort to break down hidden barriers of prejudice and assumptions about the colleague we are working with. In Ananda Marga he/she is not only our colleague, but something more—a fellow aspirant on the path whom we eat and live with! I am somewhat reassured to see that the daily struggles we have in forging the new synthetic society in our own organization, is parallel to the struggles faced by others who, maybe unknowingly, are moving towards the same goal.

By and large I have been





impressed with the tolerance and sincere attempts by the internationals to be sensitive to the customs and traditions of the Indonesian society and the similar respect shown by the Indonesians towards their overseas collaborators. One cannot help but be impressed by the acceptance and tolerance of multi-culturalism as a growing reality of the present society. It may become a trap for some of us Margiis when we become too "inward-looking", i.e. we easily identify our weaknesses which we know all too well, yet maybe don't realize that we have to constantly endeavor to overcome these defects just as others do outside of AM. We should not become discouraged by our seemingly slow rate of progress on these very deeply-imbedded personal issues that relate to samskaras and spirituality. And the more that we look outward and engage ourselves with non-Margiis we are challenged to test our own assumptions and beliefs against

reality. Slowly but surely we become the "seasoned devotee" that Baba expects us to be: one-pointed on Him, yet capable of rendering practical and useful service to the needy.

I have come to appreciate the uniqueness of our cadre. Baba has incorporated social service as an integral part of our sadhana system. Hence for an Ananda Margii, service is not dependant on any other incentive than the spiritual one. Our "Career volunteers" are admired by others in the NGO field, because of the dedication that such a job description stands for. Due to the pressures of family, many NGO workers cannot afford the luxury of working without a salary. Many times their contracts are for limited periods of time, simply because they wish to see their family and return back home where everything is familiar. Our cadres, though they may be lacking certain technical skills in regard to relief work, bring such a high level of sincerity to their

work that they earn the respect of their NGO colleagues.

I remember when we would convey to Baba some news of our relief activities in Africa back in the 1980's, one time He commented, "Let AMURT become bigger than the Red Cross". Of course the Red Cross is the first and largest relief organization in the world. I was told that they are even more than a relief organization—they have almost the same status as a government. They are commissioned by international law to ensure that the rules and regulations in the Geneva Convention signed by all countries about the treatment of prisoners of war, etc are obeyed by any country where they operate. So from a small relief organization that began in the late 1800's, it has grown to become a giant player in ensuring human rights are respected during times of disaster, man-made or natural.

Those who have been fortunate to do relief work have
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Sectorial News

Expansion at the Ananda Marga River School

This year has opened with more expansion and plenty of good news in our 12th year. At the end of last year we realised not only did we need to add a new primary classroom, but that we also could move

ahead one year in our schedule to add a new "Prep" class in our early education area (in line with state requirements.) Now we finally have 7 classes for seven years of school (instead of mixed classes), plus three years of "preschool." The exciting part was receiving an unexpected government grant of US \$160,000 (!) to build and fit out the new prep classroom, after we had already budgeted and arranged loans to cover it ourselves. It felt like such a special kind of spiritual grace in the way it happened.

It was also a kind of spiritual experience to see our new buildings arrive on cranes through the air! This year for the first time, instead of renovating second-hand donated buildings, we were able to order buildings that were built off site, and then delivered to the school. A much faster and less stressful process! But of course they

arrived late -- during the second week of school. All the kids were on hand to see the buildings swinging through the air!

All told this last 12 months has brought US\$ 240,000 worth

of grants, including new play areas, new computer center, ceramic kiln and pottery wheels, and a beautiful new "art space" (open air and

fronting into rainforest!). We have also been so happy to hire our first two Margii teachers in this year, and they have been such a wonderful addition.

-- New year six teacher, Tara McPhail, and school director Prabha Demasson will be traveling together to the NH Educator's Conference in Sweden. How wonderful that the school can support their trip. (Didi Tapomaya from Melbourne Pre-school and Anne Welch from the Blue Mountains will also come.)

-- On the last day of our school year in December, all the children pitched in to plant over 200 native rainforest trees near our creek (partially funded by more grant money!) What a beautiful sight! It was part of such a highly vibrated few days at the end of the year including great performances, and our usual deeply touching graduation ceremony. (Its always so beautiful to hear the deep feelings of our graduating class about their years at the River School.)

-- Various service projects



The River School "Inaugural Strings Concert" in June. The Cello and Violin students (including Dada and Prabha) performed with the first River School choir!

continue at the school such as year 1 students raising money with an art sale for poor children in India, year 3 students regularly visiting residents at a seniors' center, and all-school participation in the Walk Against Want.

-- At least ten River School families, and several teachers, attended the Ananda Mela festival. It was great for these families and teachers to have a blissful taste of a spiritual lifestyle, with daily meditation, kiirtan and yoga, plus inspiring workshops. As one teacher commented, "It was nothing like I ever expected to happen on this earth. I am successfully blissed out!"

The Power of Guruvakyam

Every Monday morning begins with "All School Morning Circle" that includes a candle-lighting and blessing ceremony and uplifting songs. We also recently have added certificate presentations for children

who are examples of the various virtues we are studying.

This morning we sang a song that Dada recently taught the children called "Soon the Day

Will Come.” (Written by Mohan Bagby about 20 years ago.) After the Circle our second grade teacher came up and asked to know more about that song. She said that while we were singing the words rang in her ear in a very special way, giving a deep spiritual feeling, but it stopped at the end of the song. We explained to her that the words from this song are exactly taken from a Baba quote! I felt it was an example of the power of Guru Vakyam (Guru’s words.)

-- Kamala



Piiyusha designed this silk screen bag at the “Bridge Creek Festival” at the River School.

Wellington Region

A pracar strategy plan for the year 2006 has been formulated. Since March 2005 Yoga classes have been provided regularly at the Psychiatric Unit of Auckland Hospital. One participant has taken initiation.

A Revolutionary Marriage was conducted on Dec.19. 2005. This beautiful ceremony was

held in the Auckland Domain.

A successful retreat was held over new years, attended by thirty margiis.

An opening ceremony was held at a North Shore health centre run by Nityaprema January 2006.

A House Warming was conducted at the new home of Ranjit and Prema February 2006.

Ongoing meditation and Yoga classes are held twice weekly at the Auckland Jagrti.

Regular Dharma Cakra with Akhanda Kiirtan or Sadhana Shivr held on the first Sunday of every month.

Upcoming Meditation classes, Introductory lectures, one day seminars are advertised in the City Scene (A free event circular provided by Auckland City Council).

Christchurch

by Madhumita

We compiled a Meditation directory including 20 groups teaching meditation in Christchurch. 633 copies have been distributed and there is a website ready to go- we just need to find someone to host it for free. Once its up and running we’ll turn it into a national meditation website. We’ve been checking out other spiritual groups.

We attend a monthly Kiirtan, organised by a Satyananda devotee. We sing lots of different mantras and the 30 souls there really make a strong spiritual vibration. People really enjoy our Baba Nam Kevalam mantra and many remember it from when margiis attended the ‘Convergence’

Kiiran has started a website to encourage service amongst young people. Last year she arranged for 300 volunteers including 8 NZers to work in projects, mainly in

Africa and South America. This was in reaction to huge cost for people wanting to volunteer for social service projects around the world. Other organisations are thought to be charging up to \$1000+ per month, with the actual project seeing little of this money.

The university Yoga club went well last year with a strong bunch of regulars. It will start again soon.

***“Wherever
organisational
matters are
concerned, I am
physically there.
Don’t worry. You
go and do your
duty,***



Manikya models the new school shirt which has been very popular.

Note: Please send any updates on Marga activities for future Pranams.

Also, if you need your regular Good News “dose,” remember you can subscribe to Good News online on Suva-GoodNews@yahooogroups.com

Baba Stories

HOW HE BRINGS US TO HIM

There was an Indian doctor who was not satisfied with merely being a routine doctor. He wanted to start a comprehensive relief program to provide health care for all of India. He knew that alone he could not do this, so he approached the government. Finding no interest there he wrote to all the religious organizations in India with social service programs. Among the people he wrote to was Baba at Lake Gardens. However he did not get any reply from any of them, including Baba. One afternoon when he was in Calcutta, he was walking down a road when he heard a car honking at him. He

walked over to the car and found that he was talking to the President of Ananda Marga - Baba!. Baba talked with him for some time, and then invited him to come along with Him in the car to discuss further. This man drove to Lake Gardens with Baba and then never ever left for many years. He got his acarya training in Lake Gardens, and also his first posting was in Lake Gardens. Once he was with Baba, he remained with Him.

There was a devotee in Bihar who was very upset that there was so much difficulty in getting Baba's contact. He thought to himself that, if I really am Baba's son, why should I have so much trouble in seeing my father?? He took a resolution that from now on he would not try to see

Baba; rather, he would wait and see if Baba would come to him and ask him to come with Baba. Just after this Baba was imprisoned. Many years passed.

Finally, in August 1978, Baba was released, and was once again with His devotees. Once when

Baba was on tour in 1978-79 in India, the driver was forced to take a smaller road. It just so happened that this road passed by that same margii's house who, years before, had decided to wait until Baba

came to him. When they came near the house, Baba ordered the driver to stop.

Then Baba told them to call this devotee and tell him that his Baba is here. The devotee came out, stunned to see Baba at his house. Baba then invited him to get into His car. The devotee shyly refused. Baba again asked him to come in the car. The devotee, with his head down, again refused. Baba then for a third time insistently asked to come in the car. The devotee refused, and Baba's car drove away, never to return.

Once a young Bihari boy was sent to Lake Gardens to see Baba. He had just been initiated and had no clear idea of Baba. Day after day Baba showered him with so much love. Finally one day Baba told him that he should go for

acarya training. This devotee was not interested in anything except Baba, and so he agreed to whatever Baba wanted. Then he went to the training center. After receiving so much love from Baba, the separation was nothing but pure torture. This devotee did not take part in any training. All he did all day long was cry, as his heart burst again and again at separation from Baba. Finally after two months, Baba called him to Lake Gardens and made him an acarya without taking any examination in the philosophy. This was his training—to cry for Baba. This training, just like being on fire, is what one needs if one is to be made into pure, hard steel of the true, selfless devotee.

“Day after day Baba showered him with so much love.”

PAST LIVES

Once two Dadas were talking together. They were telling each other that since they had close contact with Baba, they must have been great people in their past lives. Sometime after this conversation, in a darshan, Baba called forward one of those two Dadas and asked him to do sadhana. Then he told him to see his past lives. To his shock, that dada saw himself as a rich capitalist in the last century who was a great exploiter. Then he saw himself in another life as a warrior who had slaughtered many people. The dada felt thoroughly chastened. Then, he saw himself as a man living during Lord Shiva's lifetime. A disciple of Shiva had initiated him, and he had done sadhana for just five minutes, and thereafter never again did sadhana.

For these five minutes of sadhana, he was graced in this life with Baba's contact – not with Krishna's.

Later on, the second Dada was also shown his past lives. He had led a very existence in all his lives, except during the time of Lord Shiva. At that time, he was Lord Shiva's chair!

AMURT

(from page 13)

always felt the tremendous spiritual blessings that come as part of the work. Relief work has numerous advantages that we can think of: serving the suffering humanity, learning new administrative and practical skills, learning to apply our spiritual disciplines in an appropriate manner during an emergency, developing the good name of His Mission, obtaining funds for the expansion of His Mission amongst others.

In this regard there have been suggestions that AMURT be given an even greater role in helping to establish His Mission. Baba created a new post of Global AMURT Coordinator back in 1987 as He realized the immense value of AMURT's contribution to the establishment of His Mission. He used to tell us that His Mission in Africa would be established through relief.

There are now efforts underway to develop a team of workers and Margiis from all corners of the globe who may be pressed into service on 24 hours notice when an international disaster breaks. For this AMURT should have ready emergency funds to meet the calamity. Baba wanted AMURT to be first on the scene in the event of any calamity. With the large number of natural disasters this year, it seems imperative to establish this global team immediately.

If the team is big enough, it would not put too much strain on any Sector who may have to sacrifice one or two workers or Margiis for a certain length of time. Moreover, rotation of the team could take place over the course of the operation so that nobody is missed for a long period of time from their original posting. An important consideration of the relief operation is the

decision to withdraw upon conclusion of the emergency phase or to continue assisting in the rehabilitation phase. Ideally the global team members could withdraw upon the completion of the short emergency phase (3 months) giving way to the local or national chapter to follow up with rehabilitation work, under the supervision of the AMURT Coordinator or AMURT Secretary of that Sector.

In a similar way, there are a growing number of workers and Margiis who have gained invaluable experience through working continuously on a specific project or activity over a prolonged period. The project may either be receiving funding from a non-Margii donor or it may have reached the stage where it is self-sufficient through its own resources. Amongst these projects, workers should also be moved around, so that they learn new skills in managing for example a school, clinic, coop, yoga centre, community garden or whatever is the core project. Alternatively they may repeat their original success in a new place while teaching their colleagues how they have done it. There should be a constant effort to utilize the valuable experience of a worker/Margii who has been able to achieve the difficult objective of attaining self-sufficiency (i.e. sustainability) in a project. Like the system of "each one teach one" and "multiplier effect".

This is certainly not a new idea. It is part of His organizational system that workers get transferred in the course of their worker life to hone their skills, expose themselves to different cultures and develop more spiritual surrender as His Missionary. What to speak of AMURT, Baba's idea was that many of His departments would be able to take on such a vast jurisdiction over the course of decades. AMURT seems to be ahead of the rest and could set the example for others to follow.

We see good examples of these projects in our Departments of Education, Children's Homes, Master Units and Prachar. While AMURT has achieved some semblance of a global character, other departments should also grow this outlook and constantly gather and share the invaluable experiences of their cadres for the benefit of all.

Given the dedication of our WT's, the magnanimity of His vision for service, the growing wealth of experience of our workers and Margiis in different fields of service and the global reach of His organization, it is time now to share more of that knowledge base so that incoming cadres can benefit from them. I see the bright possibility of AMURT attaining the status that Baba had for it with all of the positive results that such an expansion would bring. By our coordinated action we can bring that auspicious moment earlier for the benefit of the entire Universe.

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A Baba Dream

by Kamala

It was a mundane day filled with mundane duties, but I had such a sweet Baba dream that I woke up in the middle of the night remembering it clearly.

Baba was visiting California. He was staying in a house or jagriti and I had the pleasure of sitting alone with him during a quiet moment. The strongest memory of the dream was how absolutely comfortable it was to sit there with Him -- I felt absolutely contented. I didn't mind what he spoke about, and I didn't feel at all shy or concerned about what I might say.

Baba mentioned how bad the racism was he had seen. He also was noting how nobody understood who Krishna really was. (there was a mental feeling that Baba was suggesting that the Hari Krishna movement had given completely the wrong idea.) Then Baba commented that racism (against Black Americans) was all the worse because "Krishna Himself was black." (I had the image that Krishna was very dark black-skinned.)

I mentally thought to myself that here I disagreed with Baba, but it was okay. I thought racism was bad anyway. But Baba was implying that particularly we should not treat Black people badly because Krishna was that color. Baba seemed so angry about this situation that I said, "But Baba, I did not cause this." And he looked at me with complete sweetness, and said, "No, you did not."

It was getting close to a mealtime. Baba commented that there are many hungry people nearby. I couldn't think who he meant. The image came to my mind of some teenage hooligans who I had met in an alley in an earlier dream. Baba showed me that these young people who seemed just to be causing trouble were also hungry -- and required our service.

Then it was time for the meal and many brothers came in to sit around the table. I felt disappointed that my private, intimate and happily contented time with Baba was over.

I have seen Your smile
And met Your eyes
Sung to You and heard the
music of Your voice
But those days have gone.

I have lain before You
And touched
Your cherished feet
And caressed them
But those days too have gone.

I have held Your hand
And talked to You
And felt Your fingers
on my face
And even too Your hands
upon my head in blessing
But all those days have gone.

And even though deeply in
sweet Dhyana
I have dived into You and felt
You all around and in me

So that my very
atoms dance insanely.

I miss You
and those warm Calcutta nights
When sweet and laughing
You walked in Your garden
And eased the hopeless
longing of my heart.

Gurucharan

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As Soon As You Think of Me

When the emergency was over and Baba was released, one Dada was on his way to meet him. His train went via Jamalpur on its way To Patna. In Jamalpur, he was sitting near the train window and a brother saw him and recognized him due to his orange dress. The brother saluted him and asked:

"Dada, are you on your way to see Baba?"

"Yes", he replied.

"Kindly convey my pranam to Baba. I was his childhood friend". He then mentioned his name to Dada.

When Dada arrived in Patna, he sat with Baba along With many others. One day passed, but the dada did not get an opportunity to say anything to Baba. The next day, while sitting with Baba, Baba asked him: "which route did you take to come here?"

"Baba, I came via Jamalpur". And then he remembered and said. "One brother from Jamalpur gave his pranam to you, Baba". With Folded hands Baba received the salutation and asked. "What was his name?"

Dada said: "Baba he has very little hair on his head and he said he was your childhood friend. I forgot his name, though he told me".

Baba replied: "You see, I have spent my childhood days in Jamalpur, so I have many childhood friends there. They are now all aged and have less hair also, so how can I know the name of this person?"

Dada could not remember. Then Baba told him: "Come nearer, touch my toe".

When Dada touched Baba's feet, Baba asked: "Is his name R. K. Mandal?"

Dada replied: "Yes Baba, Yes Baba."

Then Baba smiled and said: "Look, his hand is very Powerful. The moment he touched my feet, I remembered the name. All of You should keep his powerful hand in your pocket". Everybody laughed.

Then Baba said: "He had given his pranam the day before Yesterday at noontime, right?" "Yes Baba".

Baba then said: "You know, the moment he conveyed to you His pranam, I received it right away. I am mentally always with you. Anybody who thinks of me, at that same moment, I come to know it".



*Devotion, from complete because
they know that the Lord is with them
always protecting them (Baba)*

"I will do exactly as He wants, I will colour my mind with His colour, and I will not think whether that will bring joy to me or not. Let Him be pleased...that is my only wish"

This is the highest stage of devotion."
--Baba

